

Smart Objects function a lot like groups in that they let you combine multiple layers and help you stay organized in your document. The biggest advantage to Smart Objects is that the pixel data and vector shapes you store in a Smart Object are perfectly preserved letting you resize and manipulate it without affecting the original image data. This is incredibly handy for Photoshop pieces where you have photos that you are constantly resizing to fit. It also means that you can embed complex vector assets directly from Illustrator.

Another advantage to Smart Objects is that they read the composite image data of the layers they are storing. This also conveniently moves a lot of layers out of your document, which is great if your layers palette is starting to get cluttered. If you have a photograph with a lot of adjustment layers that is bogging down your machine, you can convert all of the layers to a Smart Object and increase your performance drastically.

Note: While you can apply layer styles to a smart object, it doesn't use the smart objects alpha channel. This means layer styles like drop shadow and stroke will look weird because it will apply the layer style to the outside edge only and not composite it like it would a normal layer.

Smart Objects also allow you to use filters non-destructively.

#### **Creating a Smart Object:**

Creating a smart object is easy. Just select the layers you want to group using shift in the layers palette. Then right click and select 'Convert to Smart Object'.

To create an Illustrator vector smart object, just copy the vector shapes you want in Illustrator then paste them in Photoshop. Be sure to select 'Smart Object' from the paste options menu that pops up.

#### **Editing Smart Objects:**

To edit a Smart Object, just double click on the layer. If it is a pixel based image, it will open up a new Photoshop document with the smart layers in it. If the smart layer is Illustrator vector based it will open up the vector data in Illustrator. When it opens the new document it's only a temporary file in memory so be sure to save it before you close it. Saving this temporary document doesn't create a new file, it just saves the modified information into the original document that contains the Smart Object.

- Use with Filters
- Use with Transformations
- Use with Layouts